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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [KIRF](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON HADI AL-MUTIF

REF: A. RIYADH 8671
[1](#)B. NOVEMBER 6 2006 U.S. COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM (USCIRF) PRESS
STATEMENT "SAUDI ARABIA: USCIRF
CONCERNED BY MISLEADING CLAIMS ABOUT
RELEASE OF RELIGIOUS PRISONERS
[1](#)C. RIYADH 8725

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Gfoeller for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) PolOffs met on November 6 with Human Rights First
Society (HRFS) President Ibrahim Al-Mugaiteeb to discuss the
October 31 and November 1 visit of King Abdullah to Najran
and his pardon of Ismaili prisoners, ostensibly including
Hadi Al-Mutif. Al-Mugaiteeb said that Al-Mutif has not been
released from prison even though Saudis widely believe that
he was included in the pardon of Ismaili prisoners announced
by the King on October 31 (Ref A) (NOTE: Ministry of Interior
officials confirmed for Post earlier on November 6 that
Al-Mutif had not been released. END NOTE.) Al-Mugaiteeb
believes that Interior Minister Prince Naif decided on his
own that the King's pardon would not include Al-Mutif.
Al-Mugaiteeb urged the USG to pressure the SAG to ensure that
the King's pardon specifically included Al-Mutif and that it
immediately release Al-Mutif from prison.

[1](#)2. (C) Al-Mutif has been in prison since 1994.
Al-Mugaiteeb said that Al-Mutif was originally given a death
sentence for blasphemy but claimed that, despite reports to
the contrary, then King Fahd never commuted Al-Mutif's
sentence to life or to 14 years. Instead, King Fahd only
stopped the execution of Al-Mutif. Al-Mugaiteeb claimed that
Al-Mutif is serving a precarious, undefined sentence which is
why he staged a hunger strike at the beginning of September.
Al-Mugaiteeb added that it is unclear whether the death
sentence could be implemented because there has never been an
documentation that this sentence was commuted.

[1](#)3. (C) According to Al-Mugaiteeb, Al-Mutif will begin another
hunger strike on November 13 and simultaneously announce his
affiliation with HRFS. While acknowledging that the SAG
reacts negatively to public pressure, especially by the USG,
Al-Mugaiteeb insisted that the USG should pressure the SAG to
pardon and release Al-Mutif. Al-Mugaiteeb announced that
USCIRF would release a press statement on November 6
advocating that Al-Mutif be released (Ref B). (NOTE: The
USCIRF statement advocated the pardon and release of all
Ismaili prisoners. It implied that Al-Mutif was a religious
prisoner similar to the Ismailis who were imprisoned for the
April 2000 protests against SAG seizure of an Ismaili shrine
and religious leaders. It contained contradictory
information, stating at one point that Al-Mutif had served
"nearly 15 years" in prison, then later stating that he was

sentenced in 1994. END NOTE).

¶4. (S) Al-Mugaiteeb cited the confusion over the King's pardon and Al-Mutif's fate as an example of the lack of rule of law in the KSA. Al-Mugaiteeb claimed that Prince Naif's stubbornness accounts for his apparent disregard for the King's wishes. Al-Mugaiteeb implied that Prince Naif and Najran Regional Governor Prince Mishael bin Saud take a personal interest in discriminating against and persecuting Ismailis in Najran. Al-Mugaiteeb could not account for how Prince Naif and Prince Mishael can openly defy King Abdullah in terms of refusing to apply the King's pardon to Al-Mutif and release him from prison. (NOTE: Reportedly, in April 2001, Prince Naif and Prince Mishael defied then Crown Prince Abdullah when they did not act as he directed regarding a letter of grievances against them submitted by a delegation of Ismaili leaders. Reportedly, the Crown Prince promised to address the Ismailis' grievances, but, instead, Prince Naif and Prince Mishael arrested the Ismaili leaders. Subsequently, a month later, all but one of the Ismaili leaders were released. END NOTE).

COMMENT

¶5. (S) The confusion over the pardons in Najran highlights systemic problems with rule of law in the KSA. SAG decisions are not always in writing and therefore create confusion -- as is the case with Al-Mutif's status. Conservative Sunni clerics consider the Najran Ismailis to be heretics. Prince Naif's reported efforts to keep an Ismaili blasphemer in prison would be consonant with Naif's effort to maintain close ties to the Sunni Ulema. END COMMENT.
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